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PROGRAM

SEP 20 1999

# 1005 Public Comment

Date AUGUST 19, 1999

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Comments:

SEE ATTACHED (4 pages)

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I'm Martin Andrews Farm Bureau president for Inyo and Mono Counties. That means the Owens Valley for most of you. You think of the Owens Valley as a beautiful water rich area that was once an agricultural paradise. You are half-right...it is beautiful.

The fact of the matter is that the Owens Valley is and was a beautiful but marginal agricultural area. In the early part of this century virtually all the farmers and ranchers gladly sold their land to the City of Los Angeles. They were subsistence operations that did not compete well with other agricultural areas for many reasons.

The City of Los Angeles now exports much of the valley's water to the city. The Owens Valley has been taken from a sub marginal agricultural area to a tourism area. The terrain and climate that made the Owens Valley a poor agricultural area lends itself to tourism activities. Government now owns almost all the land in the Owens Valley. Life in the Owens Valley could be far better without the easily swayed competing interests of the various bureaucratic managements such as the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Game, as well as the city of Los Angeles. Government is a poor land manager.

If you believe the city of Los Angeles did real damage to the Owens Valley you should step back and see what the Cal Fed process proposes to do the greatest agricultural area in the world...California's Central Valley. America did not miss the agricultural production from the Owens Valley. America will miss the reduced productivity slated for the Central Valley.

America obtains half of its fresh fruits and vegetables from California. Sadly, agriculture means little to a state whose wealth in other areas, such as the computer industry, is staggering. Cal Fed proposes to reduce private land holdings and agricultural production in the Central Valley. America cannot make up the resulting food supply loss in the Corn Belt or on any of its sovereign soil.

Cutting to the chase, the Cal Fed process has developed into one where land and water will be essentially stolen from agriculture for municipal and environmental uses. Great gobs of land will be removed from the production base and laid waste by eventual governmental over-management. Agriculture will suffer. California will suffer. America will suffer.

Throughout history one of the requirements of stable government is the ability to supply its citizens with cheap and plentiful food. Currently, American and California agriculture is able to over produce; therefore, food is cheap and plentiful. We now enjoy cheap, plentiful, and safe food. In America we are currently so overfed and ignorant about where food comes from that we have the luxury to make ignorant choices. The current overproduction of food is a temporary condition...it will pass. Much of the world is hungry... distribution problems exist. Distribution problems are political problems...governments interfering with supply and demand markets. Simple thought processes would cause one to realize that in a relatively short time it will take all the agriculture there is to feed the planet. Removing any agricultural production from the Central Valley will surely rate as a major political blunder in the not so distant future.

Today one of the biggest non-issues in America is food safety. The food produced in America is the safest highest

quality food ever available on the globe. If you listen to the media and people with something to sell you might think otherwise. The proof, however, can be found in the coldest hardest business there is...life insurance. The life insurance actuaries have the cold hard facts. Life insurance is cheaper to purchase now than ever before and virtually nobody dies from food related problems.

The Cal Fed process can help change all that for the worse, however. As more rich California farmland is taken through condemnation, inverse condemnation, and regulation the production will be made up somewhere. Currently, a noticeable amount of our food source has been exported out of the country to other countries that are less concerned with food safety than ours. Cal Fed promises to be a big player in exporting our food supply sources to other countries.

Rather than try to socialize all the water in this great state with another huge layer of bureaucracy let us instead consider an option more in line with the Constitution. Property, in this case water, does not necessarily need to be condemned... it can be paid for...and purchased quite inexpensively.

There exists on virtually all California farms the ability to conserve some water. In some cases an investment in additional management will accomplish a water saving. In others a capital investment might be needed. At some cost to them, most farmers can conserve some water without jeopardizing production. The laws currently exist in California to allow farmers to be paid for conserving water. Pay them for their efforts and risk. It would cost taxpayers and ratepayers far less than a massive inefficient bureaucracy and will continue to produce results indefinitely.

Be fair; give legal Constitutional means such as voluntary water transfers a chance.

The current Cal Fed program promises to do for the Central Valley what Los Angeles did for the Owens Valley but with real damage. The highest and best use for the great flat fertile expanses of the Central Valley is agriculture not tourism... not tracts of government owned and mismanaged land. The Cal Fed program of removing significant agricultural production from the Central Valley will go down as a rape of the valley far surpassing anything that was ever done to the Owens Valley.